

Walnut Canyon Study Area

Jennifer Hensiek
Deputy District Ranger
U.S. Forest Service/Coconino National Forest

And

Kayci Cook Collins
Superintendent Flagstaff Area National Monuments

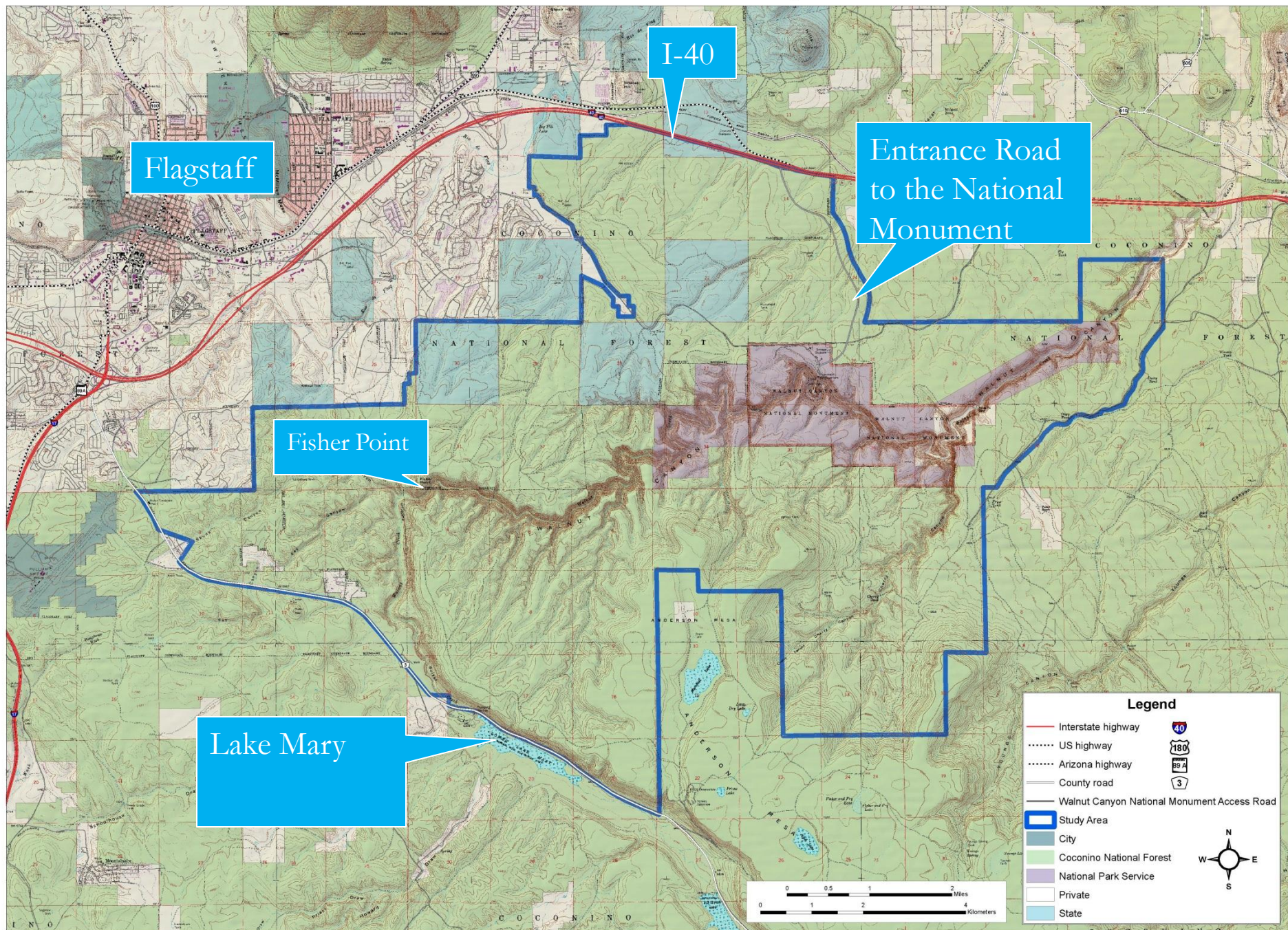
Joint Meeting of the Flagstaff City Council
and Coconino County Board of Supervisors
February 3, 2014



Background

- On March 30, 2009, President Obama signed into law the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (the Act).
- The Act directed the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to conduct a special study on management options.
- The study area includes approximately 30,000 acres:
 - Mostly federally managed land (USFS)
 - 3 + Sections of State Trust Lands
 - Some Private land

Surface Land Ownership



Act Directs to Assess:

- The suitability, and feasibility of designating all or part of the study area as an addition to Walnut Canyon National Monument (includes “national significance” determination)
- Continued management of the study area by the Forest Service; or
- Any other designation or management option that would provide for
 - protection of resources within the study area; and
 - continued access to, and use of, the study area by the public.

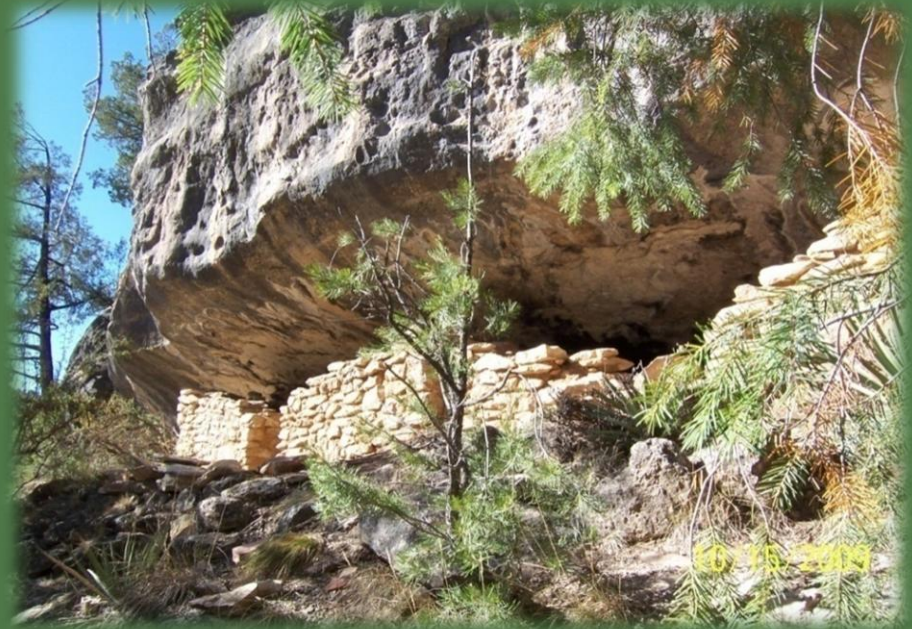
Special Study Process

- Developed a Joint Scope of Work for Contractor
- Public Involvement and Consultations
- Data Collection and Analysis
- Jointly Developed and Assessed the Management Options
- Collected Public Comments on Management Options
- Draft Study Document Published with Final Solicitation for Public Comment
- Final Joint Document Completed



Public Involvement and 2011 Workshop

- Participants:
 - AZ State Forestry
 - AZ State Trust
 - City of Flagstaff
 - Coconino County
 - Coconino NF
 - NPS
 - AARCHER (facilitator)
- Developed a list of management options for study area based a common understanding, public input, preliminary research on land designation options, and discussion between the agencies



Options Distilled from Public Meetings and Comment Periods:

- 1. Continuation of current management by the U.S. Forest Service**
- 2. Congressional action establishing a special designation to the study area**
- 3. Congressional action that prohibits the exchange of lands to other than federal land management agencies**
4. Transfer of the study area as a new unit in the national park system
5. Transfer management responsibility of a selected portion of the study area to Walnut Canyon National Monument, with continuation of current management of the remaining areas by the U.S. Forest Service
6. A recommendation for congressional designation of the study area as wilderness
7. Joint agency management.

National Park Service Management

Land considered for addition to the National Park System must meet **FOUR** criteria:

- **National Significance:** Must be an outstanding example of a resource. For cultural resources, they must meet the National Historic Landmarks criteria.
- **Suitability:** The area represents a resource type not already adequately represented in the NPS or protected by other entities.
- **Feasibility:** Includes analysis of costs for acquisition, development, restoration and operations, threats, condition of resource, staffing, local support, planning and zoning along with socioeconomic impacts.
- **Need for Direct NPS Management**

NPS Boundary Expansion Can Occur if:

- Significant resources or opportunities for public enjoyment related to purposes of the park (must have a substantial relationship to park resources)
- Addresses operational and management issues such as access and boundary identification by topographic or other natural features or roads
- To protect park resources critical to fulfilling the park's purposes (Need for protection must be clearly defined and the threat fully documented. Concerns about changing land uses around parks are not considered justification for boundary change.)

NPS Boundary Expansion Cont.

These three criteria focus on quality and character of resources within or adjacent to current park boundary.

Boundary adjustments may be appropriate for any one of these conditions and all three do not need to be satisfied.

However, the next two criteria must be satisfied prior to NPS park boundary expansion recommendations:

- Must be feasible to administer considering size, configuration, ownerships, costs, and other factors.
- Other alternatives for management and resource protection are not adequate (need for direct NPS management).

Continued FS Management

Option 1

- Continued Multiple Use Management
- Authorized uses like recreation uses, grazing, and forest thinning opportunities expected to continue
- Potential to have area designated as a Regional Forester Special Area



Congressional Special Management

Option 2

- Congress can designate Special Management (SM) Areas. Nearly 100 SM Areas on federal lands.
- Legislation establishing each SM Area is unique, but designations generally are: national monuments, game refuges, scenic areas, recreation areas, and other protected areas.
- Could raise land acquisition/disposal/exchange to requiring an act of Congress if language is in enabling legislation.

Congressional Restriction

Option 3

- Congress could approve legislation for specific land management direction, i.e., restriction on land disposal out of federal ownership.
- If enacted, land disposal actions would require specific act of Congress.
- No concrete examples of this type of option found during study.

TABLE 2. SUMMARY/COMPARISON TABLE (PAGE 57)

	Option 1: Continued Management by USFS	Option 2: Congressional Special Management Designation	Option 3: Congressional Restriction on Disposal
Support current range of multiple uses	Yes	Continued management by the USFS—use emphasis could change, resulting in either increases or decreases in some uses	Same as Option 1 - Continued management by the USFS
Local decision-making to respond to changes in future needs	Yes	More constrained than Option 1	Same as Option 1
Protection of cultural resources	No change; protected by current federal law and regulation	Same as Option 1	Same as Option 1
Recreation and visitor use	Use responds to growth, changes in activities; supports FUTS and Loop Trail	Could increase or decrease depending on designation	Same as Option 1
Land use in the special study area	No change; allowable land use consistent with Forest Service policies and local site and planning considerations	Allowable land uses may be defined by congressional action. Designation could limit agency flexibility to effectively manage for threats to public health and safety	Same as Option 1
USFS management	No proposed change; management objectives are defined under Forest Plan. A Regional Forester designation could be considered in the future	Adds additional layer of planning and staffing responsibility; may change depending on the designation	Same as Option 1
Achieves primary goal of protecting the land from development in perpetuity	Land exchange approved at forest or USFS region level	Land disposal would require act of Congress	Land disposal would require act of Congress

State Trust Lands 10, 20, 22, 28, and 30

- Sections 20 (adjacent to) and 30 (within) have high development potential due to their location and proximity to infrastructure.
- AZ State Lands acknowledges that sections 22 and 28 are appropriate for acquisition by the federal government due to the conservation value and a low likelihood for development. (AZ Prop 119)
- AZ State Lands would consider designating the area in section 10, south of I-40 as open space subject to density considerations in subsequent general plan / zoning actions.

Final Report Available at:

<http://www.nps.gov/waca>

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/coconino>

<http://coconino.az.gov/>

<http://flagstaff.az.gov/>

All Documents formerly on Walnut Canyon Special Study website are posted to:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/WalnutCanyonSpecialStudy>

Thank You

Jennifer Hensiek

jhensiek@fs.fed.us

Kayci Cook Collins

kayci_cook@nps.gov



